

Do We Go To Heaven When We Die?

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The belief that humans go directly to heaven upon death has been taught for centuries, and is part of most religions today. The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia states, "...We are influenced always more or less by the Greek, Platonic idea that the body dies, yet the soul is immortal. Such an idea is utterly contrary to the Israelite consciousness and is nowhere found in the Old Testament" (1960, Vol. 2, p. 812, "Death"). The first century Church did not hold to this belief, either, "...the doctrine is increasingly regarded as a post-apostolic innovation, not only unnecessary but positively harmful to proper biblical interpretation and understanding" (The Fire That Consumes, Edward William Fudge, 1994, p.24).

Unfortunately, the teachings of Plato and other Greek philosophers have affected Christianity. Jeffrey Burton Russell wrote, "...the unbiblical idea of immortality did not die but even flourished, because theologians...admired Greek philosophy (and) found support there for the notion of the immortal soul..." (A History of Heaven, 1997, p.79).

Therefore, in order to come to the correct understanding about what happens to human beings after death, we cannot rely on philosophers. Instead, we can only rely on God's word, the Bible (Jn. 17:17).

It would make sense that if a person goes directly to heaven upon death, the head of the Christian church, Christ, would also go directly to heaven upon death. Scripture, however, shows that this did not happen (cf. Jn. 2:19; 21-22; Mk. 8:31).

Although God the Father did resurrect Christ after 3 days and 3 nights in the grave, this fact does not prove that humans are automatically transported somewhere upon death. On the contrary, scripture shows that Christ was the **first** to be resurrected from the dead; this means that everyone born prior to Christ is not resurrected yet,

He (Christ, *comments in parenthesis added throughout*) is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have preeminence (Col. 1:18).

No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven (Jn. 3:13).

Despite what is commonly thought, 1Peter 3:18-20 does not speak of Christ going to a place called hell when he died. Rather, it refers to Christ making a proclamation to the fallen host held in chains during the days of Noah.

Even those who had God's Holy Spirit prior to Christ's earthly ministry, are not yet resurrected.

Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day (Ac. 2:29).

So even King David, a man after God's own heart (Ac. 13:22), is still dead and buried waiting to be resurrected. Scripture shows those who receive God's holy spirit **after** Christ's earthly ministry will also wait to be resurrected.

For this we (Christ's apostles) say to you by the word of the Lord, that we (i.e. true Christians) who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord (Christ's return to Earth) will by no means precede those who are dead (i.e. David, etc.).¹⁶ For the Lord himself (Christ) will descend from heaven with a shout (cf. Jn. 5:28), with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain (at the time of Christ's return) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (cf. Rev. 19:7). This is the first resurrection, and everyone involved in this resurrection will descend again to this planet and rule it under Christ for a thousand years (cf. Rev. 20:4) (1Thes. 4:15-17)

So man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, They will not awake Nor be roused from their sleep.¹³ "Oh, that You would hide me in the grave, That You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, That You would appoint me a set time, and remember me!¹⁴ If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, Till my change comes (Job 14:12).

However, contrary to what is taught by most of Christianity, all those who are not part of the first resurrection will remain dead until this thousand year period is over.

But the rest of the dead **did not live again** until the thousand years were finished (Rev. 20:5).

If those who are **not** resurrected at Christ's return **do not live again until the thousand years are over**, that means they are not alive in any way, shape or form, which coincides with many other scriptures on this point,

For the living know that they will die; but **the dead know nothing**... (Ecc. 9:5).

Contrary to what is taught today about the dead being able to watch what the living are doing on the earth, scripture says the dead do not know what is happening on this planet.

His (the dead man's) sons come to honor, and he (the dead man) does not know it; they are brought low and he does not perceive it (Jb. 14:21).

If human beings were immortal souls, we would be conscious and aware after our death, but scripture shows we have no consciousness at all. Therefore, there is nothing immortal about humans, which is why the bible refers to us as being mortal (1Cor. 15:53-54). Our only hope is in the only true God to resurrect us,

...in hope of eternal life which God who cannot lie, promised before time began...(Ti. 1:2).

This resurrection is based on repentance (Ac. 2:38) for the sins one has committed against God (1Jn. 3:4).

As everyone has sinned at some time during their lifetime (1Jn. 1:10; Rom. 3:23; 5:12), they have **earned** the penalty of death, not immortal life,

For the **wages** of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23).

...The soul (nephesh = man or person) who sins shall die (Eze. 18:4; cf. Eze. 18:20).

For those who never understood the aspect of God's plan of salvation dealing with sin, they will be brought up in the second resurrection referred to earlier, and have their opportunity to repent for the sinful life they lived during their earthly sojourn (Eze. 37:1-14).

This plan validates the statement made in 2Peter 3:9 that God is not willing that anyone perish (i.e. eternally). However, because God has granted free moral agency or choice, He will not force anyone to make choices against their will. Therefore the possibility remains that some will choose to go against God's will even **after they understand the consequences**.

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened (i.e. understood God's plan for mankind and the fallen host), ⁵ and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the son of God, and put him to open shame (Heb. 6:4-6).

The above scripture shows that human beings do not automatically have eternal life as a result of being born. Eternal life is only available because of Christ's atoning death and our choice to obey God the Father as Christ taught in the next scriptures,

Afterward Jesus found him (the sick man) in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. **Sin no more**, lest a worse thing come upon you" (Jn. 5:14).

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? (Rom. 6:1-2)

So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Mt. 19:17).

John 8:44 shows that Satan was a liar from the beginning, which would include the beginning of Adam and Eve. Therefore, when he stated to Eve that she could disobey the word of God and still not die, he was teaching her that she had, or

was, an immortal soul, who could live forever in disobedience to her Creator (Gen. 3:1-5). This lie is still being taught today, and sadly it is coming primarily from the very religions that call themselves “Christian.”

For I choose to follow not men or men’s doctrines, but God and the doctrines [delivered] by Him. For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this [truth],¹⁹⁵ and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians... (Justin Martyr, Anti-Nicene Fathers, Book 1, Dialogue with Trypho, 194-195).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God’s truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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